

EARLY CHILDHOOD ALLY

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5 THING I'M LOVING

Spring Equinox

I had the opportunity to attend a Spring Equinox Celebration at the Ludington Arts Council this month. I wasn't sure what to expect and that is always a bit unsettling. It was about 90 minutes and included time to visit the art gallery featuring women artists, work our way through the labyrinth and participate in a drumming circle. I met some new people and am glad I went. Although the weather hasn't shown it I know spring is around the corner.

Small Business

I have challenged myself to visit one small business a week through summer. I am especially seeking out new places I haven't gone. I have always supported small businesses however, I found myself searching Amazon and Target websites for items I might be able to find locally. It has resulted in meeting the young woman who has started a bakery and meeting a friend for lunch at a restaurant that was great.

Routine

Do you need a regroup on your schedule/routines? I always feel like with the seasons its a great time to evaluate how we are spending our time.

I struggled over the past 3 months settling in with a schedule and routine. There were many reasons why and yet I know I function at my optimum when I have more predictability in my days. The gift was I took inventory of what was working and what wasn't. I leaned into my habits and regrouped. I like to batch my work and so I have ended up with some longer days and some shorter days. I also incorporated starting my day with a yoga class a few days a week. Also, mid-day 15 minute breaks to move my body.

March Madness Basketball

I truly enjoy college sports and the women's and men's tournaments have been excellent. There have been so many close games and excellent story lines. I am especially excited to see the women's games being elevated to better time slots and announcers. It is staggering to look at the stats. The 2023 NCAA women's basketball tournament broke so many records during the Sweet 16 and Elite Eight. ESPN reported that an average of 1.2 million people watched each of the eight games in the Sweet 16 – a 73% increase from 2022!

Celebrating Jazzy and Liam

How fun we have an engagement in our family. Jazzy who has been a critical part of making things happen with ECA got engaged in March. Liam is definitely one of the bonuses that came into our lives during the pandemic.

INSTAGRAM

If you follow me on Instagram you will be finding an increase of stories over the next month. I am playing with how I spend my time on developing content. It's always a dance trying to keep up to date with all the latest and greatest. As always, let me know what you are looking for!

- Highlights from the ECA Leadership Conference
- Earth Day
- Birds



GRIEF AND TURNOVER

Let's talk about grief in the workplace a bit more. Actually, I feel like we need to talk about it a whole lot more. It's been interesting to hear from so many of you how complicated processing grief is when you are trying to navigate delivering the best programs you can for families and children. The overwhelming feedback is that you need to push past it and move on. 😞 Here are a few ideas that may be worth trying.

Do your best to identify how you are feeling. Sometimes what makes it hard is we haven't sorted out how we are feeling. All feelings are valid.

Try to find a community/team member you can have a conversation with about how you are feeling. Remind them you don't need it to be fixed...you just need to be heard.

Journal about how you are feeling.

Celebrate the team member before they leave. This can be as simple as a handwritten note, sign or special treat. Some closure to the transition helps everyone.

Advocate for transparency with families when turnover happens. Staff shared the burden of not having conversations with families as soon as they knew.

Grief/turnover can often create low morale and feelings of sadness for those relationships (even when you are happy for them). Try to be proactive for this in your own self care practices.

Strengthen your relationships with remaining staff. Acknowledging that it can be time consuming and scary to invest time and energy when they might leave too. Relationships always matter!

COST OF TURNOVER TO PROGRAMS

We often don't slow down enough in our days to think about the financial costs of turnover to programs. Here is an easy way to get a sense of what that number is. I think looking at it over 6 months, a year and 3 years is important. I know that it might feel like a pain point and yet we need good data to help us make decisions. That includes what we pay people and what revenue sources we have.



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How to calculate employee Turnover Rate

$$\frac{\text{Number of employees who left}}{\text{Total number of employees}} \times 100 = \text{Employee Turnover Rate}$$

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“

Example

$$\frac{10 \text{ employees left}}{25 \text{ employees}} \times 100 = 40\%$$

”

RESEARCH BY ONE OF OUR OWN

A huge thanks to Brooke, an ECA leader who shared her thesis with me on turnover. This is just a small snippet of the document that is over 100 pages. I believe that there are some critical nuggets that we can lift from this.

If we don't change nothing will change.

Research on Turnover

I love that one of the ECA leaders did her research on this important topic for her thesis.

Here are a few of her findings!

First, she looked at the effects teacher turnover had on children's behavior and academic progress, teacher morale, and the management and quality of the program.

The results indicated that children's behavior escalated and intensified after turnover occurred, but other factors may play a part in behavior.

Research on Turnover

Here are a few of her findings!

Children academically showed regression in social-emotional development, literacy, language development, and mathematics.

Teachers were found to have left the program due to challenging behaviors, lack of support, and an overwhelming amount of paperwork with little time to complete tasks.

Program supervisors were found to spend more time in classrooms and conducting interviews, and stated the program was not functioning as efficiently as it once was in the past.

The study showed the importance of providing teachers with tools and resources to feel supported and motivated, as well as the importance of reviewing assessment tools and practices.

Children are required to form new bonds and relationships with new teachers, thus not feeling as comfortable with new teachers as they did with their familiar caregiver. Behaviors had either remained the same, or became more frequent, following teacher turnover.

Children's behaviors were negatively affected by teacher turnover, partly due to the foundation of trust being broken when a teacher resigns.

The areas of development that saw the most regression were social-emotional and literacy for 3-year-old classrooms, and math, literacy, and language for 4-year-old classrooms. Certain classrooms saw more regression than others, with 3-year-olds showing more regression than 4-year-old students. Due to most of the regression being within social-emotional development for 3-year-olds, learning in other areas is less likely if social-emotional skills are not mastered.

Another common theme among teacher reporting is that, with turnover, their responsibilities change and become more concentrated. Site supervisors reported managing sites during turnover was difficult. Multiple teachers left due to workloads being heavy upon start date, not feeling supported, and secondary effects of being understaffed.

A common theme among site supervisor reports was the lack of time taken away from their office time. Supervisors stated that majority of their time was spent conducting interviews and supporting challenging behaviors in classrooms. Overall, teacher turnover has created many secondary effects that affect both students and staff.

Recommendation #1

More
more training on social-
emotional development for
children, as well as more
resources for
handling children with
challenging behaviors.
Challenging behaviors was
reported by teachers to
be the most common
reason why teachers
chose to leave the agency.

Recommendation #2

Programs should hire additional mental health consultants, as well as utilize more mental health consultants in classrooms. Data shows that mental health consultants were able to document the progress of behaviors, as well as communicate with teachers and parents about possible solutions and accommodations. Mental health consultants are also able to give supportive feedback, suggestions for management, and helpful resources. This would also give teachers the ability to see modeling of the management of children with challenging behaviors, including aggression. If a third teacher, or support staff, is added to classrooms with challenging behaviors, teachers will have the ability to either help the child with behaviors or work with the rest of the group while the support staff assists the child exhibiting behaviors.

Recommendation 3

Add more professional development surrounding trauma-informed teaching, behavior management, and ways to cope with work stress.

Giving teachers the opportunity to learn new skills could help with confidence building, as well as new strategies to use in the classroom. Burnout can be avoided by adding “fun” to trainings, as well as ways to relieve stress and methods of coping with stress.

Recommendation 4

For managers to spend more time at sites to engage with staff, as well as build relationships with each member. Teachers reported the need for feeling appreciated and staff recognition is another suggestion for staff morale to boost, as well as a method for retaining teachers.

Recommendation 5

A need to review the authenticity and accuracy of teacher assessment. While majority of data seemed accurate, one classroom in particular showed regression in every objective and area of development. This regression ranged from a decrease in one level to a decrease in five levels. Trainings that revisit assessment could benefit this program. Discussions around assessment could be beneficial during staff meetings or Professional Learning Community meetings.

HIRING TIP

Focus on **WHAT** the organization can do for the hiree. I encourage you to think like the candidate is a new family you are trying to enroll in your program. How do you highlight all of your strengths as a program while being clear with who you are?

As I was reflecting with two leaders I respect, we acknowledged that we need to shift some of our practices. For many years we wanted the potential candidate to highlight all they would bring to the organization. We recognized that although we need to understand that we also need to elevate what the benefits of the role will be. Don't assume anyone knows what those are. The little things can add up!

CRYSTAL (MURRAY) GEM FROM THE FIELD



My insta friend Crystal had such an excellent gem she shared with me when we were diving into the topic of turnover solutions. She said, “The more quality onboarding and check-ins you provide in the first three months will give you the biggest return on investment in the long run. We are in a **RELATIONSHIP** based business and prone for connection as a species. Relations = **RETENTION!**”

Crystal Windell is an ECE Business and Leadership Strategist Coach that has been in the work of ECE for 25 plus years. More importantly, she lives each day in her mission to equip and empower Early Educators from coast to coast by bringing nationwide expert coaches straight to the nap room each week with infamous Nap & Learn Sessions in her monthly membership program called Teachers as Leaders for childcare centers.

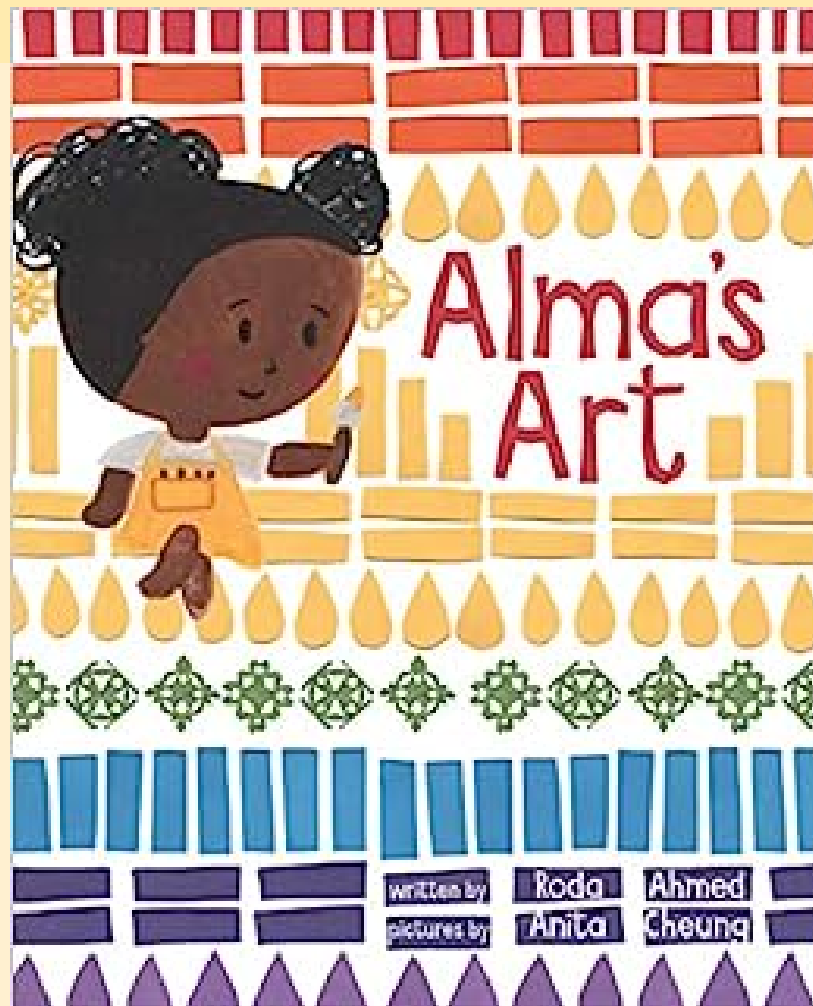
For more information I can be reached at
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ART SHOW LIBRARY

I love an art show anytime of year to build community. I was excited to hear that some of you did classroom art shows and others embraced it as an entire program. One important benefit is that we are able to highlight the importance of art and creativity. This is especially important in a world that tends to focus on the academics of early childhood. Children also get a boost of confidence showing their artwork to their family. Displaying art and hosting a family activity elevates the art. Children beam with excitement as they show their work off.

My friend Heather added a robust Art Show Library to their Art Show. This way families could also check out books to bring home and explore with their children. We know that families intend to go to the library and sometimes that isn't possible. Having a library easily accessible is a benefit for everyone. Here is the list of books she had available.



ART

Mix It Up

Art

Maybe Something Beautiful

I Dream To Be An Artist

The Dot

Dog Loves Drawing

Swatch

Louise Loves Art

Anna At the Museum

The Little Paintbrush

Little Blue and Little Yellow

I Am An Artist

The Art Lesson

My Museum

Beautiful Oops

I Am An Artist

Lines That Wiggle

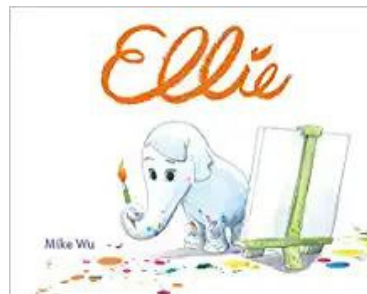
To Be An Artist

Sky Color

Alma's Art

The Artist Who Painted A Blue Horse

I'm the Best Artist in the Ocean



Mouse Paint

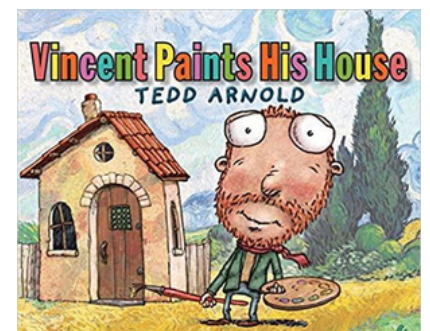
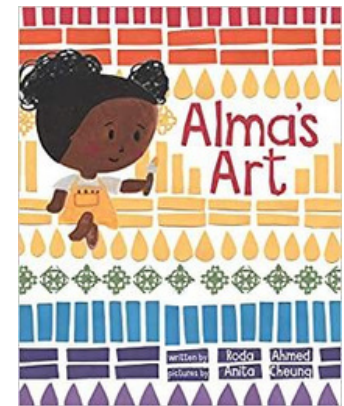
Vincent Paints His House

Mini French Masters Books

Never Let A Dinosaur Scribble

Splatter

Ellie



ADAM GRANT BOOKS

“Resilience comes from deep within us and from support outside us. It comes from gratitude for what’s good in our lives and from leaning into the suck. It comes from analyzing how we process grief and from simply accepting that grief. Sometimes we have less control than we think. Other times we have more. I learned that when life pulls you under, you can kick against the bottom, break the surface, and breathe again.”

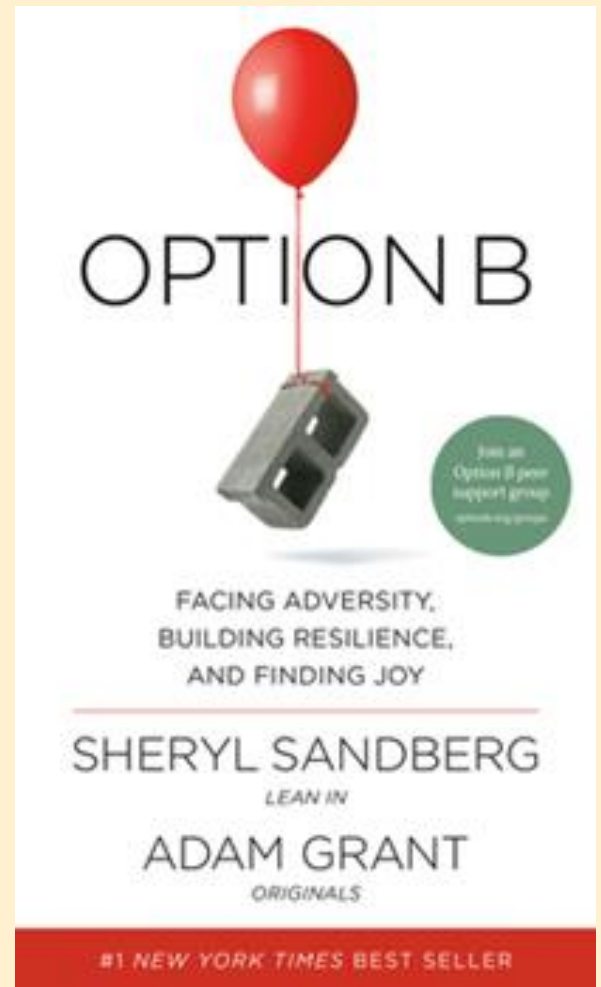
– SHERYL SANDBERG

This month I spent some time researching and reading Adam Grant's books. The book I found the most interesting was Option B. Some of that has to do with the different stories highlighted in it and Sheryl Sandberg being a co-author. It also dovetailed nicely with all of the research I had been doing around turnover and grief.

In a nutshell the book explores how a variety of individuals overcame challenges. There were practical tips for creating resilience within our communities and workplace. It also embraces the idea of finding joy. Something I feel like in education we need to understand more about.

The idea of the Three P's is one of the hallmarks of the book. We need to avoid personalizing, permanency and pervasiveness when life happens. And the truth is that it will. While encouraging actionable ideas such as list 3 wins a day or 3 moments of joy for the week.

There are some YouTube interviews on the book also that I found to be useful.



@EarlyChildhoodAlly

WELCOME TO EARLY CHILDHOOD ALLY!!

Are you new here? We are so glad you have joined us!

A little bit about me, I am the founder of Early Childhood Ally (ECA) and have been in the field for 40 years as a teacher, coach, mentor and director. I started the Early Childhood Ally Instagram page just over two years ago with the support of my family and friends, especially my daughter Jazzy.

My partner Herm and I live primarily in our cottage in the Manistee National Forest after 30 years of living in Midtown Grand Rapids. I have two daughters Britany who works and lives in East Lansing with her partner Nick. Jazzy lives and works in Grand Rapids. I do travel into Grand Rapids often for work and to see my grandchildren Rosalie and Alex with my bonus daughter Ashleigh.

I spent over 20 years at Grand Rapids Community College leading and directing the Early Childhood Learning Laboratory, an accredited, star rated program in the heart of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Over the past year I transitioned to semi-retirement and am loving working as the Lead Coach for our Play and Learn grant. If you are interested in following along with that work you can check it out on Instagram through Play and Learn GRCC. I coach and mentor a handful of Directors which is incredibly rewarding.

As a long time advocate of all issues impacting the field of early childhood I have more time to devote to my passion. If you are interested in specific content don't be shy and reach out and let me know. I am always eager to hear what you all need.



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